UNITED NATIONS

DIVISION FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

Bulletin

January/February 1996

Volume XIX, No. 1

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96-11939

I. ACTION TAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

On 26 February 1996, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People opened its first meeting of the 1996 session, with statements made by the Secretary-General, Ambassador Kéba Birane Cissé of Senegal, the Committee's outgoing Chairman, and the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations. The Committee decided to maintain the present composition of its Bureau until the election of the Bureau to be held at a later date. Expressions of gratitude to the Chairman and of assurance that he would continue to support the cause of Palestinian rights were offered by the representatives of Afghanistan, Egypt, Guyana, Malta, Pakistan and Ukraine.

The Secretary-General's statement, as contained in press release SG/SM/5897, and the statement made by Ambassador Cissé, translated from French, are reproduced below.

"Statement by the Secretary-General at the opening of 1996 session of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

"I should like, first of all, to express my gratitude to the members of your Committee for the able manner in which they are fulfilling their mandate on the basis of the General Assembly resolutions.

"I should also like to congratulate you, Mr. Ambassador, on your wise chairmanship of this Committee during the past few years. This manifests the just and consistent support that your great country has given to the search for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. As you have been assigned to another post and will be leaving New York in the near future, I wish you all success in your new assignment.

"The General Assembly has, at its fiftieth session, reaffirmed the mandate from which this Committee derives. The past few years have seen the moulding of history in the Middle East. And in the past few months, the peace process has continued and made progress.

"It is true there have been some setbacks. But, by and large, the vision inherent in the Declaration of Principles signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1993 has been sustained. Both parties have demonstrated their commitment to the principles and provisions of the agreements signed by them. And, equally important, they have shown their determination to proceed in the implementation of the agreements they have reached.

"Both have accepted negotiation as the means to resolve immediate and long-term political differences between them. They have persevered in attendant efforts. Their commitment to the peace process has been maintained, indeed strengthened.

"I am encouraged by this evidence of responsiveness and responsibility. I welcomed the signing, in Washington on 28 September 1995, of the agreement between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. The world applauded their leaders, whose resolve and dedication to peace helped to reach this agreement.

"Sadly, one of the great contributors to the fulfilment of that agreement is no longer with us. Yitzhak Rabin proved himself truly to be both a national leader and an international statesman.

"I was privileged to count him as a distinguished and personal friend. I pay tribute to his memory and affirm the resolve of the United Nations to pursue with vigilance the ideal of regional peace for which he worked to the very end.

"The Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip represents an important step towards the full implementation of the Declaration of Principles. The timely withdrawal of Israeli troops and the successful holding of Palestinian elections have been further crucial milestones along this road.

"It is my hope that these achievements will encourage progress in the next important and delicate stage of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, due to start in May, as well as on the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese tracks of the Middle East peace process. This is essential if we are to realize a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

"The security situation in the region remains a cause of concern. Over the past year, I have had, on several occasions, to express condemnation over acts of violence which were

clearly intended to try and derail the peace process. Two days ago another such attempt was made - how many more innocent people must die and suffer before we have peace in the region.

"Extremism from any quarter must be curbed. There can be no more effective way to do so than to ensure that the negotiations continue and that tangible benefits deriving from the agreements already reached are apparent, and accessible, to all who are concerned.

"It is essential to redress the economic instability and improve the poor living conditions which persist, especially in the Gaza Strip. The United Nations family of organizations is contributing to the economic and social development upon which an effective transition to Palestinian self-rule must be based. This, in turn, will be an assured foundation for a lasting peace.

"The programmes and agencies of the United Nations system will continue to provide all possible assistance in the field of economic and social development. I have only recently designated my senior advisor and trusted colleague, Under-Secretary-General Peter Hansen, to be the Commissioner General for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East with his headquarters in Gaza. I am confident he will continue and build upon the work of his distinguished predecessor, Ilter Turkmen.

"I have placed the greatest possible emphasis on sustainable economic and social development in the occupied territories. As you are aware, my Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, Terje Rod Larsen, has continued to guide and support the ongoing activities of United Nations programmes and agencies. These include facilitating the development of public works projects to create immediate employment opportunities and bring visible changes to the Gaza Strip.

"A coordination mechanism has been established on the ground to ensure effective disbursement of donor funds. Training and other assistance for the Palestinian police is being coordinated. The committed efforts of the international community are gradually beginning to bear fruit and a number of improvements in the situation have taken place. This is particularly so in the areas of institution-building and the development of infrastructure.

"Allow me to express once again my appreciation for the continuing efforts of this Committee in our joint pursuit of a just peace in the Middle East. Your work and deliberations are an important source of strength. I also appreciate the Committee's acknowledgment last year of the financial crisis which is afflicting the Organization and its readiness to be flexible in its use of the resources allocated to it. I regret that the recent aggravation of the crisis obliges me to urge the Committee to exercise greater restraint and economy this year. Thank you.

"My congratulations go also to the Ambassador of Afghanistan and the Ambassador of Cuba on their re-election as Vice-Chairmen and to the Ambassador of Malta on his re-election as Rapporteur of this Committee. This reaffirmation of your commitment to peace in the Middle East is renewed testimony of the trust that your colleagues have placed in you."

Farewell speech by H.E. Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, on the occasion of his departure from New York

"As I prepare to leave my post as Permanent Representative of my country, Senegal, to take up a new post, I want first to tell you how grateful I am for the wholehearted support which I have received from all of you during my four years at the head of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. That this support has been effective is evident from the fact that the Committee has, I believe, been able to fulfil the mandate renewed each year by the General Assembly. My functions as Chairman of the Committee will end in a few days and this is the last meeting that I shall chair in that capacity.

"So, allow me to take a brief look back at these four years spent together at the heart of the Palestinian problem, before giving you my thoughts for the future.

"It is said, and rightly so, that the Palestinian problem is the core of the bad relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours. That is why, being entrusted by the General Assembly of the United Nations with the task of watching over the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, our Committee was placed at the centre of the Middle East conflict.

"I had the good fortune to serve at the United Nations and as Chairman of this Committee at a turning-point in the history of the Organization, at a time when, the cold war having relinquished its hold on our world, it finally became possible to take a calmer, more realistic approach to international relations, believing, as we do now, that all of us - Arabs and Israelis, Africans and Americans, Asians and everyone else - are in the same boat and that we must keep it afloat as we approach the third millennium or else perish together.

"When I arrived in New York in 1992, not long after the Secretary-General himself, to whom I presented my credentials only six days after he took up office, there was no hint that history would gather momentum the following year.

"So it was in an atmosphere of uncertainty about the future that I took up my post as Chairman of the Committee, a post which has always been entrusted, by tradition, to the Permanent Representative of Senegal. It was, you might say, a distinction that was conferred before I had earned it.

"We worked together, jealously protecting the Committee's mandate, denouncing without flinching, but also without bias, any violation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. We worked at United Nations Headquarters, in both the Security Council and the General Assembly, but also away from Headquarters, when non-governmental organizations (NGO) seminars and meetings on the question of Palestine were organized under the Committee's auspices, with a Committee delegation always in attendance. Contrary to what certain delegations - very few actually, less than three - believed, the Committee did not show bias in its evaluation of the situation in the Palestinian conflict. Our findings were always based on verified and documented facts and we did not mince words. In those days, it simply was not possible to put victims and torturers on the same level.

"Dear colleagues, times change and our perceptions with them. Not that our attention ever wavered or was ever distracted from Palestinian events, but because something very important happened on 13 September 1993, when the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization chose to recognize one another, thereby paving the way for mutual respect for their inalienable rights.

"Under the Oslo Agreements, which were arrived at freely because they were negotiated in absolute secrecy, the two sides decided to normalize their relations gradually, according to a timetable which, we hope, will ultimately lead to the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian State.

"The Committee had to acknowledge this change and follow the course of history. Since 1993, this has been our main concern: not to be left behind by events but also not to overtake them.

"Accordingly, from the outset the Committee recognized the importance of the Oslo Agreements and subsequent agreements and urged scrupulous respect both for their content and for their implementation timetable.

"The NGO seminars and meetings on the question of Palestine organized over the past two years have emphasized this point. As I have told the General Assembly, not only Palestinian but also Israeli and other experts and NGOs are invited to them. The dialogue established at these seminars and meetings is very reassuring, for the tendency to focus on the past seems increasingly to be giving way to concern for the future.

"Taking all this into account, the Committee itself should change, both with regard to its modus operandi and in consideration of its objectives. Thus, at our request, the Secretary-General made an appeal to the States Members of the United Nations for greater support for the Committee, implying an increase in the number of its members. Contacts have already been established and I hope that results will be achieved before long. In addition, the Committee is changing its annual programme of work, adapting it each year to new realities and requirements. This year, for example, the financial crisis that the United Nations is undergoing induced us to be more exacting in drawing up our schedule of activities.

"In this regard, I feel that the Committee, in view of current difficulties, should continue to operate in such a way as to avoid budget cuts in areas that are vital for its functioning and effectiveness. The staff of the Division should be maintained at its present number and the funds for its data bank, UNISPAL, should be strengthened. Nevertheless, the Committee's Bureau and the Division should, for their part, continue their

efforts to economize and rationalize their activities in order to achieve the necessary savings. In no case should the Committee expire from exhaustion after being gradually deprived of its means of existence.

"Allow me now to look briefly to the future.

"The Committee believes that the peace process has now become irreversible and that, in spite of the many stumbling blocks and pitfalls on its path, the process will continue along its course.

"In addition to this, the return of President Yasser Arafat to Palestinian soil, the elections which recently made him President of the Palestinian Authority, and the establishment of an Assembly, which was also elected, are, in my view, reason for optimism, which should encourage us to forge ahead.

"This does not, in any event, mean that everything has been done and that the United Nations and the Committee along with it should halt their efforts. Some people, who are perhaps a bit too optimistic, already foresee the imminent disappearance of the Committee since, in their view, Israelis and Palestinians are now talking to each other.

"That would be a misinterpretation of the Committee's mandate, which consists, not in conducting the dialogue between the two parties, but rather in identifying and denouncing any practices which, under the Israeli occupation, constitute a violation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people under occupation. These are two different things, even if we recognize that the good atmosphere created by the new dynamism in the peace process should have a positive impact on respect for the rights of those to whom I just referred. The Committee's existence, in my view, can even be seen as a favourable element in the peace process.

"It should be pointed out that, if the Committee has to denounce violations of those rights, it means that those violations still exist, not, surely, because Israel wishes to go back on the commitments that it undertook in Oslo, but rather because a situation that has prevailed since 1948 cannot be settled over night. There are problems both on the Israeli side and the Palestinian side. The explosion yesterday of terrorist bombs causing the death of 27 Israelis and wounding more than 70 others is a tragic reminder of this.

"For this reason, among others, the Committee should continue to exist and have the means necessary to carry out its policy until the real reasons for its existence, those that led to its establishment almost 30 years ago, have disappeared.

"Mr. Secretary-General, I know that you will see to this, you who have always unstintingly supported the Committee, whose importance you recognize in the process of settling the Palestinian question. You were already doing this when still assuming national functions, with your clear vision of the Palestinian tragedy. You have continued to do so since, having become United Nations Secretary-General in 1992, you became, as it were, the guardian and guarantor of peace and just causes. There is no cause more just than the achievement by the Palestinian people of all their inalienable rights. We thank you very sincerely for this because, even if it is your duty, you have assumed that duty with your characteristic enthusiasm and perspicacity.

"I should also like to take the occasion of this my last meeting with you in order to thank:

"- All the members of the Committee and, in particular, my other colleagues in the Bureau as well as the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine for the assistance and understanding that I always received from them in discharging my duties and for the success that they have enabled the Committee to achieve;

"- The Division for Palestinian Rights, whose competence, discretion and spirit of sacrifice have enabled the Committee to carry out its mandate to the satisfaction of those who entrusted it with its tasks, also deserve our sincere thanks; I recall the difficult, at times, moving moments that we spent together in order to solve certain delicate problems; under the leadership of Mrs. Reanda, the Division has some of the finest officials in the Secretariat;

"- The Department of Public Information has always assisted us as a vehicle for publicizing the results of our activities and also by taking certain initiatives in

close harmony with the objectives of the Committee; I thank the Division for this;

"- I express my appreciation to all the other United Nations bodies: the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and the Security Council, each of which within the sphere of its competence, has voted each year in favour of resolutions supporting the Palestinian cause;

"- I should like to refer in particular to our brother and friend, Dr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, the Permanent Observer for Palestine, who always guided me wisely through the intricacies of the Palestinian problem without ever seeking to impose his views.

"To everyone, I should like to say, in conclusion, that the end of my duties as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People will not be the end of the enthusiasm that has always prompted me to work on behalf of the Palestinian cause, which I shall continue to follow from Paris, my new post.

"I know that my successor will enjoy your support and, to the next Bureau of the Committee, I wish good luck."

Based on press release GA/PAL/717, Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, said that the United Nations would have a continuing responsibility regarding the situation in Palestine until it was finally resolved in all its aspects. International law was the only weapon that Palestinians possessed in negotiating a final resolution of that situation. The international community, represented by the United Nations, should maintain its principled position on Palestine while supporting the peace process.

The Middle East region had witnessed many new developments, notably the continuing movement of Israelis to the occupied territories and the Palestinian elections. A high percentage of voters had taken part in those transparent elections, which had reinforced the peace process.

All current political developments would be critical to the future. Bearing that in mind, the parties should hold true to their commitments. Safe passage between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank had still not been established. Also, persons displaced since 1967 had not been allowed to return to their homes. Attempts to close the occupied territories and isolate them from the outside world were continuing. The parties should be faithful to their agreements.

Continuing negotiations on a final solution, consistent with international law, should take place within the time-frame already agreed upon. A faster pace should be established for the peace process itself. The Israeli side should facilitate economic developments, and the international community should continue its support for the Palestinian Authority.

The suicide attempt performed yesterday had been condemned by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) at all levels. The PLO would continue to condemn all acts of violence as a matter of principle. Given the continuing peace process and its tangible achievements, there could be no justification whatever for those acts. The PLO urged a cessation of all acts of violence, including political assassination.

While acknowledging the financial crisis of the United Nations, he said that the Committee should be maintained at a level consistent with fulfilling its mandate in the present critical phase of its work. The PLO regretted remarks regarding the work of the Committee recently made by David Birenbaum, United States representative to the Open-Ended Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations. His comments had been hostile to the interests of the Palestinian people. The United Nations needed to coordinate its work concerning Palestine, bearing in mind the new reality on the ground. Positive change was a two-way street. While rejecting the views of Ambassador Birenbaum, the PLO hoped to see a more positive view towards the Committee on the part of the United States.

On 22 January 1996, the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People wrote a letter to Yasser Arafat congratulating him on his election to the presidency of the Executive Authority of the Palestinian Council, reproduced below.

"On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I have the honour to congratulate Your Excellency on your election to the presidency of the Executive Authority of the Palestinian Council. This historic election and the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement negotiated under Your Excellency's wise and able leadership, are major milestones in the long quest of the Palestinian people for the attainment of its inalienable national rights.

"I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our Committee's determination to spare no effort in support of the Palestinian people and its leadership in the next stages of the peace process and until a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine is achieved, in accordance with international legitimacy.

"I wish Your Excellency and all the members of the Palestinian Council unconditional success in carrying out your new responsibilities, which are of such crucial importance for the future of the Palestinian people.

"Accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration."

Consultations with non-governmental organizations 1 and 2 February 1996

A meeting of consultations of representatives of NGO coordinating committees and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People of the United Nations was held on 1 and 2 February 1996 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The meeting discussed priorities of the future cooperation between the Committee and the NGOs and made suggestions with regard to the programme of NGO events for 1996, held under the auspices of the Palestinian Rights' Committee. The North American NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine is scheduled for 24-26 June at United Nations Headquarters, New York. Twenty-one NGO participants representing the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine, the North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine and the European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine attended these consultations.

At the opening session of this meeting, the following statement was made by the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

"I am pleased to welcome you to this annual meeting of consultations between representatives of the North American, International and European Coordinating Committees of NGOs active on the question of Palestine, and the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Some of you have participated in our activities for a long time, while others are relatively new to this exercise. I would like to congratulate those who became members of their respective coordinating committees last year, and welcome them to our NGO network. Our Committee has full confidence that, with your well-known commitment to the objectives of the United Nations and to the Palestinian cause, and with your assistance, our Committee will continue to make a useful and constructive contribution towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine in accordance with international legitimacy and United Nations resolutions.

"As was communicated to you by the Secretariat in the letter of invitation, the Bureau felt that it would be useful to devote this annual meeting to in-depth consultations with regard to the future of our programme of NGO activities in light of the evolution in the peace process and the new realities on the ground. I will give the floor shortly to the Permanent Observer of Palestine to brief you about the important political developments that have taken place in the past few months. For my part, I would like to inform you that at its fiftieth session, the General Assembly has once again by an overwhelming majority endorsed the position and recommendations of our Committee. While welcoming the achievements of the peace process, the Assembly has reaffirmed that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until a satisfactory final settlement is achieved. As the organ of the Assembly established to deal with the question of Palestine, our Committee has a special role to play during the transitional period in continuing to promote a solution based on the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, as well as in mobilizing international support and assistance to meet their development and reconstruction needs.

"In renewing the Committee's mandate, the Assembly has once again requested it to continue to extend its cooperation to non-governmental organizations in heightening international awareness of the facts relating to the question of Palestine, and in promoting assistance to the Palestinians. The Assembly has also asked the Committee to take the necessary steps to involve additional NGOs in its work.

"We in the Bureau have spent some time reviewing and evaluating the various aspects of our NGO programme, regarding not only the substantive and organizational aspects of our NGO symposia and international meetings, but also the

extent of participation by our accredited NGOs, the usefulness of the presentations made and of the final documents adopted by the meetings. We have also sought, with the assistance of the Division, to gather information about NGOs currently outside the network but which are active in other relevant United Nations activities.

"Some of you have been involved in prior consultations with the Bureau with regard to various aspects of our programme and the need to bring about certain changes. We have intended this forum to provide an opportunity to continue these discussions, with the involvement of those of you recently elected, and to arrive hopefully at some constructive understandings. We believe that the extraordinary developments on the ground, particularly since the recent elections, and the upcoming next stage in the peace negotiations, make it incumbent upon us to carry out our efforts in the most effective and useful manner in support of the Palestinian people and its leadership. I must also mention that the continuing financial crisis of the United Nations dictates that we make the most efficient use of available resources.

"While we can discuss specific details later, I would like to use this introductory statement to raise a number of issues for your consideration:

"Firstly, I believe, we should address the programme of NGO meetings to be held under the auspices of the Committee. The Bureau believes that in order to be useful, these meetings should address concrete issues relevant to current realities, and result in realistic action programmes to be carried out by NGOs. The meetings should also develop effective mechanisms for follow-up action and for coordination with our Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights. In recent years, we have seen a leveling-off or a reduction in participation in these meetings, particularly with regard to the International Meeting and the European Symposium. Some people are of the view that this disengagement proves that we do not provide enough time in our discussion to develop concrete strategies. Some of these meetings adopt political communiques which have proved difficult and time-consuming to negotiate, and ultimately, have not been very helpful. The organizational aspect of these meetings has also often been unsatisfactory, with changes in speakers and topics sometimes taking place until a few days before the meeting. Accordingly, the Bureau is of the view that the format, substance and organization of these meetings should be reviewed, as well as perhaps their periodicity and number. We have some ideas in this regard, which we will bring up in the course of our discussions.

"With regard to follow-up mechanisms, it would appear that the recommendations for future action, which are made primarily in the workshops, often do not provide for clear responsibilities in terms of implementation, which is left to each participating NGO. We understand that the coordinating committees are primarily an informational network, and that lack of resources may make it difficult to collect information about the activities of individual NGOs and make this information available to our Committee and the Division. Together, however, we should explore modalities for making this possible in the future, so that our periodic meetings become more useful as a forum for discussing action rather than politics. I hope that our meeting this afternoon, which is devoted to such action review, will make a useful beginning in this regard. Attention may be given, in particular, to the role and operation of the coordinating committees in the various regions. As the General Assembly has mandated our Committee to continue to endeavour to expand the NGO network, the effort to reach out to new NGOs, especially those involved in development assistance, is of great interest to us. It is also very important to find the necessary means to help Palestinian NGOs in their nation-building efforts.

"Thirdly, I believe that these consultations should address the modalities for cooperation and exchange of information with the Division for Palestinian Rights. Various endeavours of the Division in the areas of monitoring, research, publications and the computerized information system, UNISPAL, can help NGOs in their work and in turn, the Division needs the substantive input of NGOs. In addition, the Division is developing a database of NGOs and reviewing participation of accredited NGOs in our activities for the past several years in order to streamline and focus its work more effectively. The Chief

and the NGO liaison staff of the Division will be available to provide details and discuss modalities for cooperation with you as needed.

"These are the most important aspects that we hope to address in our consultations, which I have no doubt will prove both intensive and fruitful. Let us all work together in this exciting task which appears now more hopeful and closer than at any time in recent history, the building of the future independent Palestinian State, which has been the goal of our Committee since its inception."

II. STATEMENTS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE PALESTINIAN ELECTIONS HELD ON 20 JANUARY 1996

On 22 January 1996, the President of the Security Council and the Secretary-General made statements concerning the holding of the historic Palestinian elections for the Presidency of the Executive Authority of the Palestinian Council and the election of the Council's 88 members, contained respectively in document S/PRST/1996/3 and press release SG/SM/5879:

"Statement by the President of the Security Council

"After consultations of the Security Council held on 22 January 1996, the President of the Council made the following statement to the media on behalf of the members of the Council:

"'The members of the Security Council warmly welcome the successful holding of the Palestinian elections on 20 January 1996, which constitutes a major step forward in the Middle East Peace Process. The members of the Council congratulate the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people on this achievement, which reflects credit on all concerned. The members of the Council note with satisfaction the conclusion of the international observers that the elections were an accurate reflection of the wishes of the Palestinian electorate.

"'The members of the Security Council consider that the holding of the elections marks a significant step towards the fulfilment of the Declaration of Principles, signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in Washington on 13 September 1993. The members of the Council reiterate their full support for the Middle East Peace Process.'"

"Secretary-General congratulates PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat on his election to Presidency of Executive Authority of Palestinian Council

"The following statement is attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General:

"'The Secretary-General extends his congratulations to Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat on his election Saturday to the Presidency of the Executive Authority of the Palestinian Council, and on the election of the Council's 88 members.

"'The holding of these historic elections, and the widespread participation in them by Palestinian voters in the Gaza Strip, West Bank and East Jerusalem, constitute an important step towards the achievement of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, providing a solid base towards their self-determination.

"'The Secretary-General hopes that the elections will reinforce the parties' commitment to make further progress in their negotiations in the Middle East peace process, concluding the interim arrangements and reaching agreement on the permanent status issues outlined in the Declaration of Principles signed by Israel and the PLO in September 1993.

"'The United Nations will continue to support the peace process in every possible way, in particular through the provision of economic and social assistance to the Palestinians.'"

III. ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

On 9 January 1996, representatives of the donor community, Israel and the Palestinian Authority gathered in Paris at the ministerial level to "re-energize" the international assistance effort for the Palestinian people and to provide additional support to the process of peace and reconciliation under way in the region. On 29 January 1996, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reported on the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP) for 1995 (DP/1996/15). Moreover, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) publication Survey of 22 January 1996 contained a front-page article on IMF technical assistance to the Palestinian Authority. The final communiqué of the Paris Conference, extracts from the UNDP report and extracts from the IMF publication are reproduced below.

"Ministerial Conference on Economic Assistance to the Palestinian People

"Final communiqué

"Following the signing of the Interim Agreement on 28 September 1995, representatives of the donor community, Israel and the Palestinian Authority gathered in Paris on 9 January 1996 at the ministerial level. Together they endeavoured to re-energize the assistance effort for the Palestinian people and to provide additional support to the process of peace and reconciliation now underway in the region. The Ministerial Conference on Economic Assistance to the Palestinian People was hosted and chaired by the Government of France. Substantial preparation was undertaken by the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee under the chairmanship of Norway, including the European Union, the United States, the Russian Federation, Japan, Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, the World Bank and the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories. Representatives of regional and extraregional parties as well as international organizations attended.

"The participants expressed their strong desire to contribute to the success of the peace process. They resolved to send an unequivocal signal to the Palestinian people, all Middle Eastern nations and the international community that we stand with the Palestinian people as it takes risks for peace and begins to play a larger role in shaping its destiny. Donors underlined the importance they attach to the elections due to take place in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on 20 January 1996.

"The participants reaffirmed their support for Palestinian self-government authority pursuant to the Interim Agreement within the context of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

"1. Conference participants emphasized the importance of improving the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian people through a comprehensive effort to create jobs, improve physical and social infrastructure, and establish the basis for sustainable economic development.

"2. In April 1995 the Palestinian Authority, the Government of Israel and the international community adopted a Tripartite Action Plan aimed at reducing the Palestinian budget deficit and at stimulating economic development. The participants praised the signature of a revised version of this accord which takes into account the most recent economic and political developments. The Government of Israel will assist and facilitate Palestinian economic development. The international community is committed to support and contribute to the economic development in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

"3. The Palestinian Authority also underscored the importance of the Core Investment Programme, which was unanimously adopted by the Palestinian Cabinet and presented by the Palestinian Authority during the meeting of the Consultative Group of the World Bank on 18 and 19 October 1995. This Programme, with its focus on economic development and employment creation, contains investments totalling US$ 550 million. The investment projects include, *inter alia*, roads, wells, schools and hospitals as well as water and other infrastructure projects.

"4. Donors demonstrated their support for the US$ 550 million Core Investment Programme and other priority projects presented by the Palestinian Authority, including the establishment of industrial zones, the ongoing assistance programmes as well as financing the recurrent cost deficit of US$ 75 million, by mobilizing the following resources:

"(a) Undisbursed commitments amounting to US$ 500 million;

"(b) Commitments in 1996 to the Core Investment Programme, other priority projects recurrent cost deficit and other forms of assistance, amounting to US$ 865 million.

"This amounts to more than US$ 1.3 billion. This will be mobilized by the donor community in 1996. In addition, a number of donor countries would continue to provide substantial levels of in-kind assistance.

"5. The Conference requested that the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee follow up on all issues raised during this Conference, and additional project proposals put forward by the Palestinian Authority. The Committee would undertake to hold an informal meeting in April.

"6. The Palestinian Authority committed itself to a medium term economic strategy focused on private investment as the engine of growth. The plan aims to help the Palestinian economy to take its place in a regional and global environment of trade and investment.

"7. The United States and the European Union announced their intention to improve ways of promoting Palestinian exports through the granting of duty-free status and other trade privileges."

"Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund

"Second regular session 1996
25-29 March 1996, New York
Item 12 of the provisional agenda

"Programme of assistance to the Palestinian people

"Report of the Administrator

"...

"2. The PAPP Programme has been enlarged and has evolved considerably in 1995 in direct response to ongoing and continuing developments in the historic peace process between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Throughout 1995, the Palestinian Authority pursued its efforts to establish and maintain central institutions of administration, not only in the self-rule areas of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank area of Jericho, but also throughout the West Bank, in five key delegated spheres of civil administration, including education and culture, health, social welfare, tourism, and direct taxation.

"...

"4. Total PAPP expenditures in 1995 are estimated to amount to $34 million, an increase of more than 50 per cent over 1994 expenditures of $22 million. The 1995 expenditures were made possible almost in their entirety through large-scale bilateral contributions to PAPP, including trust funds and management service agreements. During 1995, PAPP received the following contributions from various donors for programme activities to be expended in 1996: $11 million from Japan; $4 million from Norway; $2.1 million from Italy; $1.75 million from Sweden; $350,000 from Finland; $20,000 from the Netherlands; $400,000 from USAID; $1.5 million from the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF); and $35,000 from UNFPA. In addition, PAPP has firm commitments to receive further contributions totalling approximately $25 million from eight bilateral donors (the United States Agency for International Development, Canada, Finland, France, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States) over the next few months.

"...

"8. PAPP strategy in 1995 was to mobilize and target bilateral donor contributions to meet rapidly emerging priorities, emanating from the changes in Palestinian society and institutions brought about by the peace process. This strategy was aimed at translating the changes brought about by the peace process into immediate, positive, and tangible impacts for the Palestinian people.

"9. Within this context, utilizing the sustainable human development approach, PAPP activities in 1995 had three overriding objectives: (a) to support the institution- and capacity-building processes upon which the Palestinian Authority had embarked since its establishment in the Territories in May 1994; (b) to progress from direct PAPP-execution, which was necessary before the arrival of the Palestinian Authority, to a new generation of projects where the PAPP role is increasingly confined to technical support, supervision, and facilitation; and (c) to focus on poverty elimination by helping to create employ-

ment opportunities, especially in Gaza, where widespread unemployment has proven to be the primary obstacle impeding economic growth in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, since the peace process began.

"10. In addition, PAPP undertook a programming exercise during 1995 to formulate, for the first time, a comprehensive and forward-looking strategic framework that will guide its programme activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip over the next three-year period. The resulting PAPP Programme Framework (1996-1998) thus provides strategies and concrete programme initiatives in each of six key areas of intervention for PAPP: public administration management; gender in development; agricultural development; private sector development; employment-generating public works programme; and environmental and social sector infrastructure.

"11. The strategies and initiatives outlined in the programme framework reflect the results of an extensive consultation process that PAPP undertook, first with the Palestinian Authority to ensure that the PAPP programme would truly respond to the Palestinians' own priorities; and then with bilateral donors, other United Nations agencies, the European Union and the World Bank to ensure that PAPP activities are coordinated, from the outset, with the many other donor-supported programmes. The total programme of support, as outlined in the programme framework, amounts to $94 million for the three-year period 1996-1998.

"12. The primary aim of all of the strategies and programme initiatives identified in the programme framework is to increase the technical and implementation capacities of Palestinian Authority institutions, municipality and village councils, and civil society organizations.

"13. Finally, in line with the most recent developments in the peace process stemming from the recently signed Oslo II Accord, PAPP has already undertaken an extensive programming mission to the Districts of Hebron, Jenin, Nablus and Tulkharem, new areas of autonomy for the Palestinian Authority. This will be followed by another programming mission in early 1996 to Bethlehem, Kalkilya and Ramallah. The history of PAPP of operational activities in the Territories, as well as its intention soon to establish a UNDP sub-office in the West Bank city of Nablus, will enable PAPP to support the Palestinian Authority as it expands its autonomy to new areas of the West Bank."

"Role of the IMF

"The IMF has provided extensive technical assistance to the Palestinian Authority. Initially, the focus was on institution-building. In particular, the IMF's Fiscal Affairs Department has been advising the Ministry of Finance on establishing effective tax administration and public expenditure management systems. The Monetary and Exchange Affairs Department, in collaboration with the Legal Department and cooperating central banks, has assisted in the establishment of the PMA [Palestinian Monetary Authority], through the support it provided in the areas of bank licensing and supervision, clearing and payments systems, foreign exchange management, and the drafting of banking legislation. In late 1994, IMF staff, with participation by World Bank staff, began assisting the Palestinian Authority in preparing monthly (and subsequently quarterly) reports to donors on fiscal revenue and expenditure developments, institution-building in the fiscal area, and the formulation of the 1995 budget.

"In the second phase, since mid-1995, IMF staff have been assisting the Palestinian Authority in formulating the 1996 budget in the context of a medium-term macroeconomic framework; and a paper on the medium-term policy framework prepared by the Palestinian Authority with the assistance of IMF and World Bank staff was discussed at the donor conference. The IMF's Statistics Department is expected to intensify its work on establishing a system of macroeconomic statistics and; missions to the West Bank and Gaza Strip to assist with monetary, fiscal, and balance of payments statistics are expected to take place in 1996."

IV. STATEMENTS CONDEMNING ACTS OF VIOLENCE IN JERUSALEM AND ASHKELON ON 25 FEBRUARY 1996

The President of the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) issued statements, contained respectively in press releases SC/6180, SG/SM/5896 and OPI/NYO/96-2Q, condemning the acts of violence in Jerusalem and Ashkelon on 25 February 1996 aimed at derailing the ongoing peace process. The statements are reproduced below.

"President of Security Council makes statement to press on members' behalf concerning terrorist attacks in Jerusalem and Ashkelon

"The following statement was made to the press by the President of the Security Council, after Council consultations on Sunday, 25 February:

"- Members of the Council condemn all acts of terrorism, including today's attack on buses in Jerusalem and Ashkelon;

"- Members of the Council extend their deepest sympathies to the Government and people of Israel, especially the families of the victims;

"- Members of the Council reaffirm strong support for the peace process in the Middle East.

"- They call upon all parties to spare no effort to take all possible actions to continue to support, consolidate, and advance the peace process."

"Secretary-General condemns brutal acts of terrorism in Israel

"The following statement was issued today by the Spokesman for Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali:

"The Secretary-General said Sunday that he was 'shocked and appalled at the brutal acts of terrorism perpetrated in Israel today.'

"'I condemn in the strongest possible terms this new attack on the peace process for which we have all worked so long and so hard,' he said. 'I call on all men and women of good will not to allow terrorists to derail the precious gains achieved by the Palestinian and Israeli people at an already great cost.'"

"UNESCO Director-General condemns terrorist bombings in Israel

"Paris, 26 February - UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor today strongly condemned the terrorist bombings in Israel on Sunday.

"Two suicide bombers attacked a crowded commuter bus in Jerusalem and a group of Israeli soldiers in the coastal town of Ashkelon, killing at least 26 persons and injuring more than 80, according to media reports.

"'I condemn in the strongest possible terms these horrifying attacks obviously carried out by persons with a vested interest in prolonging hatred,' Mr Mayor said. 'But they cannot prevail. The peace process negotiations must continue. UNESCO gives its wholehearted support to all those working for a durable culture of peace in the Middle East that will end such senseless violence. I express my condolences to the families of those killed.'"

V. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS: ACTIVITIES AND INFORMATION

1. News from Within, is a newsletter published by the Alternative Information Center. Volume XII, No. 1 of January 1966 has articles on Palestine after Oslo II, which includes preparing the final map of Palestine; the Mirror of Oslo II; impact of settlements; and geopolitical effects of encirclement. It also has an article on the Palestinian participation in the Barcelona conference on liberation of trade, in which it is stated that this issue was not a Palestinian priority. Finally, it has an article on the upper and lower Gaza and how the West Bank redeployment strengthens the settlements.

2. Washington Report on the Middle East Affairs, issued by the American Educational Trust, P. O. Box 53062, Washington, D.C., 20009. Its issue No. 7 for February/March 1996 include articles on Israel withdraws troops but the occupation has not ended; Palestinians clear the election hurdle with room to spare; fate of Palestinian prisoners in question; response to Hanan Ashrawi; and the view that the assassination of Yahya Ayyash was untimely and unwise.

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